

Mónica Amor, "Marta Chilindron, Cecilia Torres, Ltd."

Dimensions, the first one person show of Uruguayan artist Marta Chilindron, opened at Cecilia de Torres, Ltd. in March. As one enters the warm space of the gallery with its wood floors and brick walls, one is struck by a series of mostly white objects that at first sight do not represent anything. Some of the pieces are evocative of abstract sculpture but the strong rectilinear quality of the forms along with the superimposition of constitutive elements instead makes one think of piled up frames (Untitled #101, and Untitled #102, both 1997). After closer inspection, and by focusing on earlier pieces done by the artist in the mid-eighties (Untitled # 10, 1986), the viewer realizes that the works collapse furniture onto itself so that a sofa, a chair, a table, or desk do not expand in depth but expand vertically upwards. One gets the feeling that the artist is trying to compress these three dimensional forms into a two dimensional space, resulting in an ambiguity that makes one talk of three dimensional planes. This ambiguity between the pictorial and the sculptural is also evoked in the surface of some of the pieces. Untitled #101, 1997 is made of wood covered by enamel but looks exactly like Untitled #102, 1997 which is made of foam core. Untitled #103, 1997 has been made with structolight, a material that imitates cement. This instability of form and surface seems to be the core of Chilindron's project. As a spatial trickster, she undermines the certainty of the three dimensionality of objects upon which architecture and furniture are predicated and aims to experiment beyond the functional requirement. A small maquette of a lost piece, Untitled #6, 19986 disobeys the vertical/horizontal axis of Cartesian space and materializes the perspectival pyramid which allows for the representation of three dimensional objects onto a two dimensional surface. This piece is made of several elements, a book shelf and a table among them, which are projected diagonally toward the floor, making the furniture converge at a common horizontal axis. The feeling of distortion is here more dramatic and the reading more complex. Not only is Chilindron playing with the conventions of painting and sculpture, in terms of form and surface, but she is also addressing the abstraction implied in the perspectival model of representation, still more evident when applied to "sculpture". Her later pieces maybe read more simply when measured against the representational rhetoric addressed by the eighties works. However they can be seen as pushing to a higher degree the abstraction and arbitrariness of Cartesian space -embodied here by the cancellation of conventional three dimensionality and the allusion to the perspectival scheme of orthogonals converging at a common point (a common axis in this case)-this is why my first impression was of frames and planes piled up against each other. The deficiency of the work to refer to something is revealed if one reads these later pieces without taking the earlier pieces into account. A certain lack, a certain absence seems to be the theme of this work. This void seems to be twofold: on one hand It refers to the blank surface, prior to representation, upon which the artist will project the world, on the other, it refers to the conventionality of pictorial space already organized according to certain conceptual and formal frameworks. And thus can be read the frame effect of some of the elements used in this recent work, as underlining the conceptual frames that limit our perception, domesticated for instrumental and functional purposes. Chilindron's work seems to be cultivating an opacity that problematizes the relation between objects and subjects, between the world and our perception of it. Hers is a project located at the border between Imagination and "reality", between perception and conception. So these pieces remind us in a certain way, of a "poetics of space".